
INTRODUCTION

If my mind can conceive it, if my heart can believe it, then I can achieve it.

—Muhammad Ali

You can learn the behavioral concepts in this book and successfully apply them to your life. Whether you are a young student or an experienced working adult, the five elements of behavior that demonstrate behavioral understanding are all the same:

- Communication, which conveys appropriateness
- Choice, which conveys judgment
- Caring, which conveys concern for others
- Commitment, which conveys duty
- Coping, which conveys fortitude

These are the **5C Elements of self-management**. We all convey these five behavioral elements to one extent or another. This book introduces you to communication, choice, caring, commitment, and coping: what they are, why they are important to you, and how to assess them in yourself and others.

Have you ever been in situations at school or at work and felt like you were not sure of what to do, or thought about why you behave the way that you do, or wondered what is the best way to handle a certain situation? *Student Success: Foundations of Self-Management* will guide you on your self-management journey and help you understand why thinking about and adjusting your own behavior are a necessary part of success. The 5C Elements are the building blocks of personal and social achievement. Commit to understanding and continuously improving them, and your results in school and beyond will improve.

As you learn about the importance of the 5C Elements on success, you'll find yourself reflecting on your own behavior and also on the behavior of others. You will start to see things that you may not have noticed or thought about before, because you will have a comprehensive framework through which to view the 5C Elements that is clear and understandable. You'll start to feel more comfortable with your decision-making and be confident in your behavior. You'll be better equipped

5Cs Elements of Self-Management or SM: The five behavioral elements that every person must manage that cannot be delegated to others: communication, choice, caring, commitment, and coping.

to trust your own judgment and successfully adapt to almost any situation. This book will change the way you think about behavior and help you better navigate situations in your private and public lives.

Rather than assiduously following what you learn about communication, choice, coping, commitment, and caring, you will use the 5C Elements to inform your approach to how you manage your own behavior and for general guidance as you go about your daily life. The main reason that you should study the 5C Elements is to establish your own personal policies about how you will conduct yourself so that you can anticipate and avoid much of the needless pain and personal anguish that's associated with blindly walking through life. **Personal policies** are defined as *self-created rules that govern your behavioral conduct*.

Personal Policies: Self-created small-scale rules that govern your conduct.

Regret: Sadness associated with some wrong done or some disappointment.

No child wakes up in the morning and thinks, "When I grow up I want to feel guilty and have **regrets** about my own behavioral conduct." Yet, according to research, 90 percent of us have big regrets about how we've conducted ourselves.¹ These types of "regret-related"² feelings can profoundly impact the way that you think about yourself and the quality of your life.

Have you ever reflected on your own behavior? Have you ever thought to yourself or even said to yourself: I think that my behavior is good, but

- How good is my behavior?
- How good is my behavior compared with others?
- How good should my behavior be?
- How do I know that my behavior is good?

If you have asked yourself these questions, what have you done about trying to obtain analytical and objective answers? Before I wrote this book, on so many occasions my only action was to answer these types of questions with, "Yes, of course my actions and motives are good." But I wasn't sure why I was so convinced of my own correctness; I just assumed (sometimes incorrectly), even though I was unable to say how or why I reached this conclusion.

This book gives you the tools that you need to examine and assess your own behavior in a much more objective, precise, and valuable way to you. The book is intended to help you improve the **quality** of your behavioral decision-making and answer such questions as

Quality: The degree or grade of excellence associated with behavioral decision-making.

- What is effective behavior?
- What is effective decision-making?

- What is behavioral assessment?
- What can I do to improve my own behavior?

These types of **self-reflection** questions will help you to develop and continuously improve your own behavior. Importantly, these types of questions will also help you predict and steer clear of many of the avoidable struggles that are associated with interacting with other people in an uninformed manner.

People experience behavior. What do others experience when they interact with you? The people that interact with you will have these same types of questions about you, because your behavior can impact them. They will want to know if they can trust you and if it's in their best interest to be involved with you. They will be looking for answers to questions like

- Are you respectful of others?
- Are you easy to work with?
- Are you reliable?
- Are you appropriate?
- Are you nice?
- Are you reasonable?
- Do you use good judgment?

The threefold purpose of this text is to provide (1) broad understanding and comprehension of the five behavioral elements; (2) to develop an understanding of how the 5C Elements relate to you; and (3) to help you answer these types of questions for yourself, so that you can objectively understand how your own conduct may be impacting you. With these objectives in mind, the book incorporates these key features:

1. Content deals with a subject of value to you . . . yourself.

The main reason that you should study these 5C Elements is to get your thinking in order about how you will conduct yourself so that you can anticipate and avoid many of the problems that are associated with behavioral complacency. The content has been designed to meet your individual needs. You will be able to objectively assess your own behavior and create a self-management plan that includes your own personal policies that will inform how you will approach communication, choice, caring, commitment, and coping.

In dealing with these subjects, however, the main aim of the text is to ensure fundamental understanding of the five elements of self-

Self-Reflection:

Examination, contemplation, and analysis of one's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.

management. Upon completing each chapter, you should have a basic understanding of what the relevant behavioral element is, why it's important generally, and how it specifically relates to you.

2. Competence in fundamental behavioral skills is emphasized. Each behavioral element is retaught, reviewed, and its underlying ideas reemphasized. Upon completing the book, you should have real competence in the use of the 5C Elements as they relate to your life. You should also have a thorough working knowledge of how behavior is assessed. You should also be able to use these skills to solve many of the more practical problems associated with living with yourself and others, because you will have a vocabulary to discuss many of the intangible aspects of behavior. Although it is essential that you thoroughly understand behavior generally, it is more important that you understand how the 5C Elements impact you, and why you behave the way that you do.

3. Numerous self-reflection activities are provided. The book has many self-reflection activities to complete. Each chapter has important terms and discussion of meaning questions to help you apply the subject matter to your own life. You should complete all of these activities to understand the nature and quality of your own behavior. In addition to these types of self-reflection activities, the book also offers other activities that will help you understand how to measure and manage your own behavior, including:

- **Behavioral observation scales** and mapping tables to assess and record your level of behavioral proficiency for each the 5C Elements.
- **Employability profile** into which you will log the results of all of your 5C assessments.
- **Personal policy contracts** so that you can write down your personal obligations to yourself for each behavioral element.
- **Behavioral adjustment model** that you can use to improve your level of proficiency in each behavioral element.

These activities are for your use alone. After you assess yourself on the different behavioral elements, you will be able to make candid comments, write down notes to yourself, and record any insights you might have gained along the way.

How to Use This Book

As you have probably figured out, this book is different because the subject of this book is you.

Behavioral Adjustment

Model: Behavioral approaches that focus on changing behaviors in behavioral decisions.

Communication, choice, caring, commitment, and coping are all important for you to know and understand now, but the material cannot be presented all at once. So, the book is broken down into six sections. Following this overview, each section provides clear and concise definitions of each behavioral element. In addition, the definitions for all of the component parts of each element are also presented. Throughout the volume, key terms appear in bold and their definitions are italicized. You can also find complete definitions of key terms in the glossary at the end of this book. I recommend that you start at the beginning and work your way through each chapter, one by one. You will quickly catch on to the style and format, as each chapter is organized by its behavioral element, guiding you through both the hows and whys of each element.

Throughout each chapter, research will be presented that underpins each element, and examples will be provided that help reinforce the major concepts. You will also get a chance to put the 5C Elements into practice.

I would encourage you to pay particular attention to the definitions, the research that is cited, and the examples, but please don't worry too much about trying to commit all of this to memory. Hopefully, these will become as engrained in you as the multiplication tables are in arithmetic. This book is about self-understanding and self-improvement, not memorization.

You will notice that there are self-reflection exercises that will help you think about why you think, feel, and act the way that you do. When you come to these "What do you think?" or "Think about it" exercises, you will have an opportunity to consciously look inward to gain perspective on your own inner thinking and gain some understanding about what really matters to you. Here are some guiding questions that you can ponder as you think about the different self-reflection exercises in the book:

1. Who am I?
2. Who do I want to be?
3. What do I really want in life?
4. How do I really feel about myself?
5. How do I want to feel about myself?
6. What are my values?
7. What matters most to me?
8. What is the right next step for me?

These types of questions are how you define yourself to yourself. When you are asking yourself these questions, pay close attention to what

thoughts come to mind. You can jot down your thoughts in the spaces provided to better understand your own thinking. Any of your answers that are contrary to what is important to you may require closer scrutiny, because they may contribute to regret later on.

Self-management is a real-time skill. Like driving, there is no way to educate you on how to effectively deal with every situation. That's the challenge of self-management: to build and use communication, choice, caring, commitment, and coping in the right combination so that you can respond effectively to both the expected and unexpected situations you encounter.

I wrote this book because self-management is a requirement for successful living. You are responsible for directing the course of your life. Without luck or inherited wealth, behavioral skill is a precondition for realizing individual and societal potential. Although there are many opinions about the purpose of education, it is not unreasonable to argue that it is twofold: (1) to help all people (individually and collectively) fulfill their unrealized potential; and (2) to give all people the tools that they need to leave the world a better place than they found it. If you demonstrate that you manage your own behavioral affairs in a manner that aligns with both of these aims, you will achieve something of great value. You will achieve contentment with yourself, which Socrates describes as "natural wealth." As the great philosopher said, "Contentment is natural wealth, luxury is artificial poverty."

You will learn how to develop your own self-management style and, importantly, build effective relationships with others. The book is organized so that you should be able to achieve mastery of the behavioral fundamentals needed for a fulfilling life. My hope is that this book will help you more effectively deal with your daily challenges so that you can be the person that you hope to be.

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Key Terms

- 5Cs of Self-Management
- Behavioral Adjustment Model
- Personal Policies
- Quality
- Regret
- Self-Reflection